

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-13. (*Canceled*)

Claim 14. (*Currently Amended*) An assembly comprising:

a shoe and a device for flexural stiffening and/or protection of the shoe;

said shoe having a flexion fold zone, an upper front surface, a front end zone, and a sole;

said device including a cover covering said upper front surface of said shoe and extending from said flexion fold zone of said shoe to said front end zone of said ~~sole~~ shoe.

Claim 15. (*Previously Added*) A device for flexural stiffening and/or protection of a shoe, including a device for a sports shoe adapted to be fixed onto a sports apparatus, said device comprising a cover configured and arranged to cover a front surface of the shoe and extending from a flexion fold zone of the shoe to a front end zone of a sole of the shoe.

Claim 16. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 15, further comprising a journal connection for connecting the device to the sole of the shoe.

Claim 17. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 16, wherein said journal connection is located with respect to said device to be connected to a front zone of the shoe.

Claim 18. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 15, wherein the device is configured to be removably mounted to the shoe.

Claim 19. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 15, wherein the device extends from a tibial support zone to a metatarsophalangeal articulation zone and/or the zone of the base of the toes.

Claim 20. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 15, wherein the device further comprises an insert, affixing the device to the shoe by the sole, and a cover, affixed to the insert, which completely or partially covers the front surface of the latter by manual thrust or traction from a user.

Claim 21. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 20, wherein the insert and the cover form a journal, the insert constituting a fixed portion thereof, and the cover constituting a portion movable along a front-to-rear direction of movement.

Claim 22. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 20, wherein said insert is implanted along an axis transverse to a longitudinal axis of the shoe.

Claim 23. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 22, wherein the insert is implanted beneath or on opposite sides of said sole, in a zone demarcated at a front by a tip of a foot,

at the rear by the front surface of a plantar arch, and laterally by the edges of the sole in their entire thickness.

Claim 24. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 20, wherein the device is mounted to the shoe by an insertion method using a shaft and lateral inserts extending through all or part of the sole of the shoe.

b Claim 25. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 16, wherein the cover has a pseudo-anatomical shape corresponding to said front surface of the shoe, capable of covering the shoe completely or partially and constituted of rigid or semi-rigid materials.

Claim 26. (*Previously Added*) A device according to claim 15, wherein the device is fixed to an upper and/or mid portion of the device by retaining and immobilizing means on the shoe.

Claim 27. (*Currently Amended*) A device according to claim 15, comprising a plurality of ~~said~~ covers to be associated with the same shoe, said plurality of covers including said cover, said plurality of covers having respectively different varying rigidities.

Claim 28. (*Previously Added*) A shoe comprising a stiffening device according to claim 15.

Claim 29. (*New*) An assembly comprising:

an article of footwear and a device for increasing flexural rigidity and protection of the article of footwear;

said article of footwear including an upper and a sole, said upper including a flexion fold zone, an upper front surface, and a front end zone;

said device including a cover covering said flexion fold zone of said article of footwear and extending forwardly from said flexion fold zone at least to said front end zone of said article of footwear.

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Claim 30. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover extends upwardly from said flexion fold zone of said article of footwear toward a top of said upper of said article of footwear.

→ Claim 31. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover extends from a tibial support zone to a zone of a metatarsophalangeal joint of the article of footwear and/or a zone of a base of the toes of the article of footwear.

→ Claim 32. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said device further comprises at least one tightening strap extending rearwardly and downwardly at an instep zone of the article of footwear.

Claim 33. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said device further comprises

at least one tightening strap extending at least rearwardly from a tibial support zone of the article of footwear.

→ Claim 34. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said device further comprises at least one tightening strap extending at least rearwardly from a tibial support zone of the article of footwear and at least one tightening strap extending rearwardly and downwardly from an instep zone of the article of footwear.

β' Claim 35. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover is attached to a front end zone of said sole of said article of footwear.

Claim 36. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover is attached to a forward zone of said sole, said forward zone of said sole extending forwardly from a front end of a plantar arch of said sole.

Claim 37. (New) An assembly according to claim 36, further comprising a fastening mechanism attaching said cover to said sole at a forward zone of said sole, said cover connecting said cover to said sole only in said forward zone of said sole.

Claim 38. (New) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover is pivotally attached to a forward zone of said sole of said article of footwear, said cover being movable between a forwardmost open position and a rearwardmost closed position.

Claim 39. (*New*) An assembly according to claim 38, wherein said upper of said article of footwear comprises a footwear tightening system, said cover at least partially covering said footwear tightening system in said closed position.

Claim 40. (*New*) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said sole comprises a plantar arch, and wherein said cover is spaced above said sole, at said plantar arch, a distance greater than a distance said cover is spaced above said sole at a front end zone of said article of footwear.

p' Claim 41. (*New*) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said cover is spaced above a median part of said sole a distance greater than a distance said cover is spaced above said sole at a front end zone of said article of footwear.

Claim 42. (*New*) An assembly according to claim 29, wherein said upper of said article of footwear further comprises a closing zone having a longitudinally extending contour, wherein said cover has a lower edge having a longitudinally extending contour, and wherein said longitudinally extending contour of said lower edge of said cover generally follows said longitudinally extending contour of said closing zone.

Claim 43. (*New*) An assembly according to claim 29, further comprising a plurality of covers, said plurality including said covers, said plurality having respectively different rigidities.

Claim 44. (New) A snowboard boot assembly comprising:

a snowboard boot and a device for increasing flexural rigidity of said snowboard boot;
said snowboard boot including an upper and a sole, said upper including a flexion fold zone, an upper front surface, an ankle zone, and a portion extending above said ankle zone;
said device including a cover attached to a front end zone of said snowboard boot and extending rearwardly to cover said flexion fold zone.

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h Claim 45. (New) A snowboard boot assembly according to claim 44, wherein said upper of said snowboard boot is relatively flexible and wherein said cover is relatively rigid.

Claim 46. (New) A snowboard boot assembly according to claim 44, wherein said cover is attached to a front end zone of said sole.

Claim 47. (New) A snowboard boot assembly according to claim 44, further comprising a fastening mechanism attaching said cover to said sole at a front end zone of said sole, wherein said cover is attached to said sole only in said front end zone.

Claim 48. (New) A snowboard boot assembly according to claim 44, further comprising a plurality of covers, said plurality including said cover, said plurality having respectively different rigidities.
